W-211 Wagstaffe

A LETTER To the Author of the late *Letter out of the Countrey*, occasioned by a former *Letter to a Member of the House of Commons*, concerning the Bishops lately in the Tower, and now under Suspension.

SIR.

IN a *Peevish* discourse, I always expect to meet with more of Passion than Reason. And you have given me no ground to alter my opinion, I confess at the very beginning, you make an Apology for your *Peevishnesses*, but I think that does not mend the matter, it only shews that some men know their own infirmity, and yet cannot forbear to publish it to the world. And what allowances soever you may bespeak and expect in a private correspondence and from your friend, yet there is not the same reason to expect it from the world; and to Print and Publish a *peevish* and fretful Letter, and then to cry out you *were betray'd by sickness*, is a *peevish*, i.e. a ridiculous excuse. For if you were *dispos'd* and *peevish* and knew it, why did not you stay till your thoughts were cooler? Wise men have always judged that grave and serious matters require a free and dispassionate mind. And your Letter gives us an instance, that in a *peevish* fit, how much soever a man may be *master of his Notions*, he is not much master of his Reason.

I cannot be perswaded, that you your self believe, that qualms and indispositions are sufficient Licences for Invectives, and that whenever your Head or Toe akes, you are thereby dispenc'd with, to fall upon the Honour and Reputation of good and excellent Men; and therefore pardon me, if I think your *peevishness* hath some other causes besides bodily temper. *Envy* is apt to raise the Spleen, and men of great Ambition and no great Virtue, are always jealous of other mens merits. There was an honourable character, (and which they very well deserv'd) given of the Bishops in the first Letter: And it is a Query (which you can satisfie) whether That was the sole, or the concurring Cause, whether it made, or only contributed to your distemper, and meeting with prepar'd matter, and the humours on the fret, hath rais'd the ferment to that pitch of wrath and bitterness, which every where discovers it self in your Letter.

This is too invidious to be open and barefac'd, and downright Detraction and Calumny melts away before the Reputations of such Men, like Snow before the Sun. But to prepare mighty suspicion and esteem under that Vizor perhaps something may be fastned, however it must be own'd, to be politickly done; obliquely to attack That Reputation, which can never without palpable infamy be directly attempted. You profess a *particular veneration* for these excellent Persons, and not content with that you add, *as true and great a veneration as any body can pretend to*. And I wonder how you would like to be thus reverenc'd your self, to have such good words made an inlet to defame you: a crafty artifice to cloud and eclipse the glory of your Actions, and to lessen (with all imaginable *peevishness*) your just value and esteem amongst men. I fansie, in such a case you would be put hard to it to distinguish betwixt your Enemies, and your Admirers.

It is not very long since that *these* great and Reverend *Prelates* had signaliz'd themselves by an unparallel'd act of Zeal for the Protestant Religion, and for the Liberty and Property of the Subject, which the whole Nation beheld and admir'd, and gave publick demonstrations of their Affection and Gratitude, suitable to so great and venerable an occasion: And now, out come you with your Letter, and (out of pure Veneration no doubt) do all you can to depreciate and undervalue the honour of it. Why, *They did but their duty, and other men behaved themselves as well as they.* Such an ungenerous and impious scorn was never before put on so glorious an Action, and can proceed from nothing but a malice, or ingratitude, as unparallel'd as *their* Virtues. If these be the effects of *Veneration*, give me the man that spits in my face; I had rather be openly reproach'd, than to have the same thing done under fawning compliments and hypocritical Reverences.

You have got a fine expression for this and call it *placing things in a true light*; as if all the kingdom was blind before, in the universal applauses and regards that were every where paid to *them*. And now forsooth they must recal their Praise and Thanks, and dance after your *new light*; which discovers that *it was their indispensable Duty, and the praise and thanks must be divided.*

It was *their indispensable Duty*, and they own it, but is it the worse or the less for that? I fancy you would be glad, if you could prove it had not been their duty, for then you might have something to say against them. And is it not very commendable, and praise-worthy, for a man to do his duty? But how poor and thin (not to say base and unworthy) is your representation of this great Action. As if they had performed only an easie and common duty, which notwithstanding deserves a better acknowledgment, and treatment than you can afford to this high act of Religion, you tell us, *you desire to consider the Actions in the naked Circumstances.* And I must tell you, that you consider this Action very *nakedly* indeed; for you omit the most material and pertinent Circumstances, which are the generous asserting of the *Protestant Religion*, and the *English Liberties*, to the apparent hazard of themselves, and all their secular interests. You know these are Duties of great difficulty, and the performance of them hath been celebrated in all Ages of the Church. And when the Fathers of our Church have demonstrated an invincible Zeal and Courage in asserting Religion, and the Laws: To have this represented, with *peevish* and contemptible abatements, is a reproach to Christianity, and reflects dishonour upon the blood of Martyrs, and the faith and constancy of Confessors.

You say, *You cannot see why they should boast*; and do they boast? of That all the world, and even your self acquit them: but you would fain insinuate it by proving from Scripture, they ought not to boast. 'Tis a Reflection upon humane Nature to answer such insinuations, and I appeal to the candor of all, for the iniquity of them. What tho' men cannot merit from God, must they not therefore have due praises from men? Envy and Detraction are no less Vices, and far more odious than Boasting. S. *Paul*, *That he might not be exalted was buffetted*, but it is to be remembred, that it was by a *messenger of Satan.* 2 Cor. 12. 7.

At this rate, there will be no such thing as Honour, Praise, and Reputation amongst men, and the most renowned and illustrious Actions will shrink into a narrow compass; you may try it in any Action that from the beginning of the World, hath had the reputation of Great and Glorious; and it is lyable to the very same that you object to the Bishops. Let us examine it in an instance of your own allowance. This very Action (provided the Bishops may have as little

little the honour of it as may be) you are content to own that it was raviſhing and *tranſporting*, and that a *whole Nation was never more oblig'd*. Now, Sir, let there be as many ſharers in this as you pleaſe, and let all the ſhares be put together; let the *Lords*, the *Lawyers* and *inferiour Clergy*, *aſſert*, *defend* and *aſſiſt*, as much as you ſhall think fit, the upſhot (in your way) will be no more honour, than you will allow to the Biſhops, a ſmall queſtion of yours will riſle it of all the glory you pretend to give it: For (as you ſay of the Biſhops) *I would only ask this Queſtion, whether it was their duty or no?* if it was, then *without admitting the Popiſh doctrine of ſupererogation and merit, I cannot ſee why they ſhould boaſt, or we* magnifie *them ſo extremely for doing that which was their indiſpenſable duty*. And ſo for any thing I can ſee, the Lords, the Lawyers, and the inferiour Clergy, (for all your *extaſie* and *tranſport*) muſt e'en go look for their honour, as well as the Biſhops, for as you have handled the matter, that glorious action is come to a fair iſſue, and upon the foot of the account we have it, they did but their duty, and ſo *need not have been ſo extremely magnify'd*.

Your pretending therefore to *divide the thanks and praiſe*, was not to give it to any body elſe, but to take it from the Biſhops. This is one of the crooked and ſerpentine ways of detraction, when the merit of an action cannot with any face be deny'd, then it deſerves not ſo much, or others deſerve it too, you ſhould (you ſay) *be unjuſt to others, if you ſhould ſuffer them to ingroſs all the praiſe*. But what injuſtice is it to others to ſuffer the Biſhops to enjoy what is *their* due. It can never be deny'd but *they* had a ſhare in that action, and the greateſt ſhare too; There were others concern'd in it, but that (tho' unawares to you) is ſo far from leſſening, that it is a conſiderable advance to the honour of theſe excellent Biſhops; for if the particular acting in it deſerv'd praiſe and thanks, certainly ſome part even of *that* praiſe and thanks is due to them who were the cauſe and occaſion of it; ſo that beſides the merit of their immediate and particular actings, (which was far the greateſt) there is an additional honour due to *them*, from that which was effected by their Authority and example, by their wiſdom and conduct. For tho' (as you ſay) *ſome of their inferiour Clergy, were as forward as themſelves*, yet I muſt tell you (if you do not know it already) they were but ſome, and thoſe (for the moſt part) the very ſame who ſtill in judgment and practice agree with the Biſhops. To inſtance in one, the learned and fam'd Author of theſe admirable Reaſons, for *not reading the Declaration, in a Letter from a Miniſter in the City to one in the Country*: But there were others, and thoſe not inconſiderable, who at firſt, were not ſo very forward, ſome thought the reading the *Declaration* to be onely a MINISTERIAL ACT, and others but MATTER OF PRUDENCE, what Readineſs therefore they ſhew'd after, was not Original, but derivative, and is owing to the Influence and reaſons of the Biſhops, their *ſeconding* is to be aſcrib'd to the *Principals*, and they follow'd, but it was becauſe they had ſuch excellent *Leaders*. And for the truth of all this, I appeal to the tranſactions and debates at the ſeveral Conſultations which were held about this matter. Beſides, it ought not to be forgotten, that *theſe Biſhops* never tranſmitted the *Declarations* to their reſpective Clergy, and each of them by that ſingle act ſecur'd a whole Dioceſe. So that what ſhare ſoever others had in the action, no body can pretend to an equal ſhare in the Reputation. Had *They* comply'd, I doubt the Number of the *Ready* would have been much inferiour to the *Non-ſwearers*.

I know my Lords the Biſhops envy no man his ſhare and honour in that action,

ould would have been glad if there had been et more concern'd in it. And there were ome (you do not mention) who notwithſtanding as well deſerve it, and had as conſiderable a part as thoſe you do mention. Thoſe are *the Gentlemen of the Jury*, who (to their immortal honour) brought in that juſt verdict, and tho' you have left them out (and perhaps becauſe they did ſo) their vertue and uprightneſs is celebrated by the preſent, and will be celebrated by ſucceeding ages. To give therefore the Biſhops their juſt honour, does not deprive that excellent *Jury*, nor any others concern'd of what is due to them, nor does the commending the Lords and Lawyers reflect upon the Biſhops. They very well agree together, and what is given to one, is not taken from another. Partnerſhip in vertue is not ſubject to the rules of Arithmetick, to adjuſt the quota's and proportions of praiſe and thanks, they beſt ſubſiſt in the common ſtock; 'Tis only your *peeviſhneſs* that talks of *dividing*. The action was united, and why not the honour? and thoſe that concurr'd in the action, will not be Rivals in the Glory.

I am aſham'd to have ſaid thus much in ſo clear a matter, and I do heartily and humbly beg pardon of my Lords the Biſhops: To plead in ſuch a caſe is a kind of retraction, and to offer to wipe out ſtains, ſuppoſes a poſſibility of their ſticking. But I have this Apology, it is not ſo much the caſe of their Lordſhips, (for that I know to be above Calumny) but the whole kingdom is concern'd, which hath already given its judgment in univerſal approbation and applauſe, ſo that to reflect upon, or to diminiſh the Biſhops, is to diſparage the publick verdict, and is a Libel upon the whole Nation.

Before I leave this, there is one thing more I ſhall acquaint you with, and that is, that how much fidelity, zeal, and courage ſoever theſe excellent Biſhops have ſhewn in this particular it is not the onely inſtance they have done it in. *Their* vertues have been try'd before, there was a time when *A ſolemn League and Covenant*, and another, when an *Engagement* was to be taken, and then *they* gave admirable proofs of their Conſtancy, and even in their younger years ſhew'd themſelves to be men of Epiſcopal vertues, that neither the Power nor peril of the times, nor the baits of intereſt, nor any ſecular matter could prevail upon their Conſciences, nor could they be any more perſwaded to ſwallow the *Covenant* and *Engagement*, than they were to read the *Declaration*. Sir, you are very pert about filling their places with as good and able men as they. I will not queſtion your ſtock, but if you will count again, I doubt (tho' it be but a ſmall number) you will be put to it, to find even *four or five* of ſuch try'd and experienc'd vertue, and who can come up to the pitch and meaſure of *their* Courage and Conſtancy.

I come now to that you call *a loſs pleaſing Subject, their Refuſing the Oaths*. I will not diſpute with you whether they have done well, or ill, or whether they ought, or ought not to take the Oaths. But whether you have offer'd any thing conſiderable to convince them.

You ſay *you will be ſo kind to them, as to make them Judges in their own cauſes*. Well that is a kindneſs, and in conſequence of it, I pray let their Lordſhips be ask'd, and the matter I ſuppoſe will ſoon be at an end. But you do not mean ſo, onely a Paper they ſet their hands to almoſt a Twelve-month ſince. If all the *Declarations* that men have ſubſcribed muſt be their *Judges*, (however the Biſhops may eſcape,) I am afraid, thoſe that are ſo hot upon this, would not be able to ſtand the Trial themſelves of their own *Declarations* and *Subſcriptions*. And yet there is a very great difference between thoſe *Subſcriptions*, and this of the Biſhops,

and

and the other Lords. When that *Declaration* at *Guild-hall* was made and subscrib'd, *The times were in the utmost confusion, the King was withdrawn, the Rabble up in all parts of the Kingdom, the Necessities pressing and urgent:* put all these together, and if there had been any need, there is reason and ground enough for allowances; and however it is very unseasonably urged by those, who themselves are so little ty'd to their own *solemn* and *deliberate Declarations* and *Subscriptions*.

But I pray what is there in This DECLARATION that so warmly affects the Bishops, as that they should refuse to be judg'd by it. The short of it is, *That they resolv'd to apply themselves to the P. of O, who had undertaken* (and promis'd by HIS DECLARATION) *to rescue us, by endeavouring to procure* A FREE PARLIAMENT: *That they would assist him in the obtaining such a* Parliament, *wherein our Laws and Liberties may be secur'd, the Protestant interest supported, to the glory of God, the happiness of the* Establish'd *Government of these Kingdoms.* And now Sir, I pray tell me, what contradiction is there in all this, to their present or to their former practises. Was it that they declared to endeavour for a *Free Parliament?* That very thing, *THEY* had done in their *Advices* and *Petition not long before.* Or was it that they applyed to the P. of *O.* and promised to assist him? Why they promis'd to assist him but in the obtaining a *Free Parliament*, and such a *Free Parliament* as might secure the Laws, *&c.* to the glory of God, and the happiness of the *Establish'd* Government. And what is all this to Swearing? how comes there to be such an inseparable connexion between the *Oath* and the *Declaration?* that the refusing the one is a palpable violation of the other. Cannot a man endeavour for a *Free Parliament*, and promise to assist the P. of *O.* in procuring one, but that in his *own judgment* he must think himself obliged to take the Oath, and if he does not, he recals his consent, and flyes from his subscriptions? How you will prove this, I cannot tell; and I am confident from these Premisses all the skill you have, can never draw such a Conclusion.

The next thing you proceed upon is, That *Salus populi est suprema lex:* and upon this Maxim, you say, *you will dispute the matter in cool bloud.* I am glad of that, for hitherto your bloud or your choler has been very hot: And (to do you right) what follows is the *coolest* thing you have said in all your Letter. You say, *The saying is deriv'd from the* old Romans, *among whom the People with the Senate, had the face of the supreme Magistracy. So that in our Constitution, the King is concern'd in that Maxim, and is not to be shut out from his share in it.* Very well, Sir, hitherto 'tis very *cool. But* (say you) *in admitting a head, I would not exclude the Body.* And so say I too, and (if you please) add, that in admitting a Body, you would not exclude the Head: and then it is as broad as long. You proceed with your Argument, *Altho' 'tis possible Kingdoms may have suffer'd by the Peoples encroachments, yet to say, that a Government can suffer in no other instance, would be full as absurd, as to say, That a man can be mortally wounded no where but in his head; but we are sure there are parts in our body as fatal to be touch'd as the Brain, and therefore ought to be guarded with equal care.* That is, if the Mouth bites the finger the Teeth are to be pull'd out, if the Head sends defluxions upon the Lungs, the Head must be cut off, because the Lungs are a Vital part, and ought to be guarded with equal care. Sir, It is to be hop'd after such clear Demonstrations, that now my Lords the Bishops will be convinc'd and take the Oath.

You say, *In those Laws we are not to stop to the rigor and words of the Law, from the moral Equity and the design of the Command-*

ment

ment, is better observ'd by breaking the Letter, 'tis lawful, nay our duty to do it; and to make good this, you instance in the Sabbath, and the *Maccabees* breaking the letter of the fourth Commandment: in which instances, the Rule holds good; as also in all Ceremonial and positive Institutions. But how comes this Rule to be extended to Moral Laws? The moral Equity of the fourth Commandment, we know; but I pray, which is the *moral Equity of the fifth Commandment*? or of any other *Moral* Precept, upon the account of which a man may break the Letter and act contrary to it, and yet keep the Commandment? when you speak plain to this, you will find your Account will reach all the Commandments as well as the *Fifth*; and in vertue of it, a man may be permitted to take *God's name in vain*, to commit *Murder*, *Theft*, or bear *false witness* as well as *not honour his Father and Mother*.

You are a little pleasant, when you talk of being *wise Martyrs* to the *Fifth Commandment*. But by this you do not only ridicule *Passive Obedience*, but also all the Martyrs and Sufferers for Religion in the Primitive Persecutions; for they were just such *wise Martyrs* and no other. For the Rule of breaking the Letter of a Law by the *Moral Equity* of it, is sure full as early, and would serve them as well as any body else? And these instances of *Equity* you mention, *That Kings were made for the people, not the people for Kings; that the Right of the Subject ought to be as Sacred as those of the Soveraign. That Government was not erected for the aggrandising one single person or family.* All these were the very same in those days, as they are now. And I challenge you to name one single instance of *Moral Equity* which did not equally affect them, as any Persons since, and might not have been as serviceable to them. And therefore (till you can shew the difference) they will be even just such *wise Martyrs*, ignorant of *Moral Equity*, and the advantages they might have had by that, to release themselves *from the rigor and words of a Law*. Of all the men I ever met with, you have a peculiar Talent in vilifying the greatest and most honourable Actions. And my Lords the Bishops have reason to take it kindly, for you allow that they did their duty, and that is more than you will allow the *Martyrs*. For (says your Rule) *if the Moral Equity* (and which was the same to the Martyrs as to any since) *is better observ'd by breaking the Letter, 'tis lawful, nay* our Duty *to do it:* and then the suffering Martyrs, either did not understand, or else neglected *their Duty* when they possessed their Souls in Patience, and chose rather to suffer than (by Virtue of a *Moral Equity*) to break the Letter of God's or man's Law. Your friend, Mr. *Johnson*, (who loves *Passive Obedience* as little as you do) can tell you, that the Primitive Christians suffered patiently because the Laws were against them, *i.e.* the Letter of the Laws. For *Moral Equity* was as much on their side before, as after the Laws were made in their behalf. That indeed gave them a Title to the Letter, but they had before the Equity. *Answ. to Jovian. p.* 160.

I have now done with your Arguments: A Province I had much rather be imployed in, than in considering Reproaches and Scandals, but that cannot be avoided in your Letter. For after *you have said all you can to convince them*; the next thing is to say all you can to defame *them*. And I defie any man to say more, or with Truth and Honesty half so much.

You have the strange confidence to charge these Reverend and Excellent Bishops with *having been the occasion of the expence of so much Treasure and Blood*. And you instance in *Ireland*. This is a very heavy charge, but it is as ridiculous as it is scandalous. I wonder

der (when your hand was in) that you did not charge them for having been the occasion of all that mortality in the Navy the last Summer, or that the *Pendennis* was cast away, or (to come a little nearer the matter, and because you talk of *Ireland*) that they were the occasion of an *unfortunate Gentleman's drowning himself*. All this you might have charged upon them, and a great deal more, and with the same truth and justice.

You have forgot what you said a little before, *That they had no Partners, no body pretends to share with them, and they must stand or fall by themselves:* and how does this account, and the present charge agree? Can men that are so few and inconsiderable do such mighty things, as to stop Armies, and prevent the relief of *Ireland*. A man would be tempted to call these contradictions, but perhaps you that can joyn *veneration* and *reviling*, may reconcile it: in the mean time, I pray Sir, Did they hinder the City from lending Moneys on that occasion, or did they hinder the raising of Men, or was they any impediment to the Parliament to promise assistance for the Reduction of *Ireland*, or finally, did they hinder the Wind and Tides. Sir, the House of Commons is now inquiring into the miscarriages concerning *Ireland*, and if you have any thing to say against the Bishops, it is very proper to apply your self to the Committee, and they have voted you shall have liberty of access, and be heard. But if you can say no more than you do in your Letter, give me leave to tell you. It is a high act of villany to charge any Man, and especially Men of their station, honour, and worth, with having been the occasion of spilling Protestant blood, and yet have not one wise word to say in proof of it.

And what is this to their refusing the Oath which was not 'till after the Protestants of *Ireland* were come over, and *Derry* was besieged, and reliev'd? I do not know what placing things in a true light may do, but in the old way of reasoning, the occasion cannot be after the fact. And I desire you would please to shew how the Bishops refusing the Oath in *July*, was the occasion that Succors were not sent to *Ireland* the *February* or *March* before.

In the last place, I shall address my self to you, upon the end and design of the first Letter, which is to recommend to the Parliament the mitigating or releasing the rigor of the Oath Act, in favour of these excellent Bishops. This you say you must approve of, and for the truth of it, appeal to your Correspondent. But you do not approve of the method proposed. Well Sir, Methods are not much to me. And if your method is better, you shall have my vote, if you please, we will compare them. The first Letter (in pursuit of this end) recommends them as Men *who are the chief for merits, as well as Authority in our Church. That their unparallel'd zeal for the Protestant Religion, and for the priviledges and liberty of the subject, deserv'd another kind of acknowledgment and return from the Nation. That the zeal and courage they made appear, cannot be so soon forgot. That it would be a wonder and astonishment that these Prelates who had escaped the fury of Papists, and made so glorious a confession for Protestant Religion and English Liberties, should in so short a time be disgrac'd and depos'd by Protestants, and when others that attempted to enslave the Nation, and even the Prosecutors of the Bishops are received into favour; The chief Champions of the Protestant Religion and Liberty, are the onely men that are ruin'd*, &c. Sir, in my judgment, this is a pretty good method; and now if you please, let us see what yours is. Instead of this, you tell us *they did but their duty, and need not be so extremely magnified, that they are men of such a temper, that neither God nor man can do any thing for them;*

Jews; you charge them *with Follies and Lyes, with the Blood of Strangers, with their turning their former Religion, forsaking God*; and to carry the matter home, you tell us, that *the People would not be concerned for their Deprivation, and there are many others as good as they to fill their places.* Now Sir, what your end is in this you best know, but if it be to procure favour to the Bishops, you have taken the strangest Method that ever was heard on. Suppose a friend of yours should undertake to recommend you to the favour of a third Person, and in order to it, should mention your usefulness, and vertues, and former services, (which in your own case, I suppose you would think might be done without tempting you to boast) Suppose another pretending the same, should say, I approve the design and of any thing that sounds in his favour, but I do not like the Method; For, Sir, This man did but his duty, he need not be so magnified, nor was he singular in those services, and not content thus to diminish you, should vilifie, asperse, and bely you besides, I pray, when there is another *true light* to be put out, give me your opinion, what you would think of such an advocate, or of his method.

There is one thing more you and the Author differ upon in point of Method. The Author recommends it to the Parliament, and thus far you seem to like it well enough, but you would have the Bishops first petition. Now Sir, I am not Critic enough in these matters, to know which is best: But this I know, that favours, the more free and unconstrain'd they are, are always the greater and more generous, and (if I mistake not) the favours to the Dissenters, and to the *Quakers*, were enacted and made into a Law, without any previous Petition from either of them. And why favours should come harder to those of the Church of *England*, (and to such eminent Lights of that Church) as I do not undertake to determine, so I leave it to them whose immediate concern it is to consider. I am,

SIR,

Your humble Servant.

FINIS.

434835